DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 414 EA 024 705

AUTHOR Poulin, Raymond H., Jr.
TITLE Restructuring Today and Tomorrow: "School Governance Revisited." Third Edition.
INSTITUTION Maine School Administrative District 4, Guilford.
PUB DATE Dec 92
NOTE 45p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; *Decision Making; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Governance; Public Schools; *School Based Management; *School Restructuring; Teacher Education; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Maine; *School Administrative District 4 Guilford ME

ABSTRACT

Schools must move away from individualism and toward more participation and shared decision making to meet the needs of society. Eight schools in Maine School Administrative District #4 adopted site-based management in an attempt to do this. Several important goals must be set in restructuring schools. First, students must enter the marketplace with high-order thinking skills in order to be competitive. Second, radical reforms are needed. Bureaucracy must be reduced, site-based management implemented, and a commitment made to giving every student the best possible education. It is clear that if site-based management is to be incorporated with consensus decision making, teachers must develop decision-making and leadership skills. Trusting relationships must also be built among all members of the educational community. Unless some of the strategies of site-based management and consensus decision-making are adopted, the downward spiral of the nation's schools will continue. Seven appendices include graphics of the network structurer for the central office, elementary schools, the high school, library, custodian and maintenance services, as well as a chart showing decision making responsibilities, and a timeline for development of site-based management. (Contains 14 references and 30 suggested readings.) (JPT)

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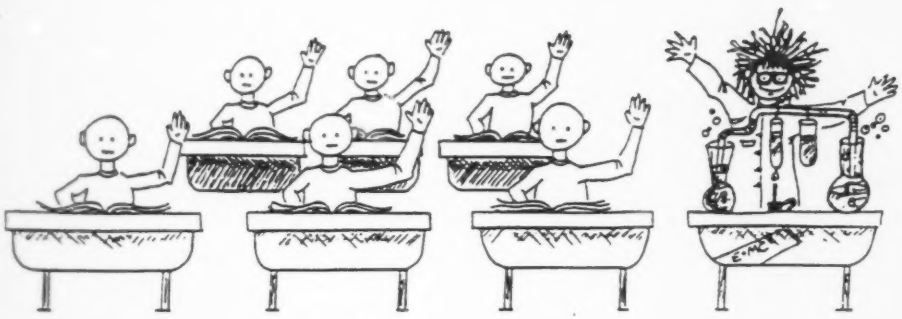
RESTRUCTURING TODAY AND TOMORROW

"SCHOOL GOVERNANCE REVISITED"

BY

RAYMOND H. POULIN, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
M.S.A.D. #4



PUBLISHED BY M.S.A.D. #4
GUILFORD, MAINE

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THIRD EDITION
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About The Author

Raymond H. Poulin, Jr. started his educational career teaching social studies in Dover-Foxcroft, Maine at the junior high school (1963). He taught at this level for two years prior to teaching at Foxcroft Academy for eight years. The opportunity to become principal of SeDoMoCha Junior High School in S.A.D.#68 was too much of a temptation to resist. After four years as principal at the junior high, he then became the principal of Dexter Regional High School, where he remained for eleven years. In 1988 he became the Superintendent of S.A.D. #4 in Guilford, Maine, where he continues his work.

Ray received his B.S. degree in elementary education from Gorham State Teacher's College and his M.Ed. in secondary education and C.A.S. in Educational Administration from the University of Maine.

Over the years Ray has received the "Outstanding Young Educator Award", "National Conservation Award", "Community Citizen Award", "Kiwanis' Outstanding President Award", "Ducks Unlimited Dedication Award", and was selected the "High School Principal of the Year". He has also been a member of several state task forces, plus held office in several professional and community groups. Ray has also been actively involved in Legislation efforts, both in the State of Maine and in Washington, D.C.

At the present time, he is promoting change and risk taking by educators at all levels. His philosophy of "***thinking outside the box***" has caused S.A.D. #4 to reevaluate how schools are run. He believes it is the responsibility of a school system to help develop educational, emotional, social and physical well being of all students by providing opportunities for them to acquire strong academic backgrounds and competencies in basic life skills.

OVERVIEW OF M.S.A.D.#4

MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT #4 is tucked away in the western Appalachian highlands of rural, central Maine. Geographically, the district represents an area of approximately 200 square miles and includes the towns of Guilford (pop. 1800), Sangerville (pop. 1390), Parkman (pop. 890), Abbot (pop. 664), Cambridge (pop. 500), and Wellington (pop. 304). There are six K-4 schools, a middle school and a high school. The total enrollment, K-12, is approximately 1025.

Guilford is home to the major employers in the area. A modern textile industry and two wood products industries employ over 1500 people from surrounding communities. Lumbering and wood operations are also major sources of income for the area. Many small independent businesses, such as furniture and cabinet making, leather goods, wood stoves, stamp and tool and die makers, as well as construction companies, thrive in the area. Although tourism is not a major contributor to local income, the area is known for fishing, hunting, camping and hiking. In short, the area is one of the few in rural America where the quality of life is not severely threatened by downturns in the economy and lack of job opportunity.

The school brochure describes M.S.A.D. #4 as "a great place to live, to learn, to teach, and to grow". This idea is reflected in the community's educational philosophy "...The educational program shall be designed to meet the needs of individuals who attend the schools, with particular attention to local conditions, changing technology and daily experiences of the pupils, and shall be designed to give pupils practice in utilizing democratic procedures and developing ethical lifestyles, while instilling an abiding faith in the American way of life, and promoting the ideals of life long learning. Findings relative to the ways in which people learn shall be utilized in designing and adapting the educational program. The Board is committed to the involvement of citizens, the communities-at-large, the staff and students in the pursuit of this endeavor" (M.S.A.D. #4 Policy Handbook).

In the past three years, members of the school community have committed to implementing the governance model of site-based management and consensus decision making. The decision to move toward this model has resulted in numerous changes in the district and the award of $570,000 from the R.J.R. Nabisco Foundation's "***Next Century Schools Project***". This project provides "capital to local schools with the ideas and courage to shake up the system". The importance of the restructuring efforts underway at M.S.A.D. #4 cannot be understated. President Bush has put educational reform on the national agenda. In his proposal for improving education, ***America 2000,*** he has encouraged local educators to think "radical change" and create "a new generation of schools" (p.4). M.S.A.D. #4 is trying to develop a new generation school system which is willing to consider change.

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FORWARD

Hill and Bonan (1991) presented five major conclusions based on a study for the Rand Corporation. They are:

- Though site-based management focuses on individual schools, it is in fact a reform of the entire school system;
- Site-based management will lead to real changes at the school level only if it is a school system's basic reform strategy, not just one among several reform projects;
- Site-managed schools are likely to evolve over time and to develop distinctive characters, goals, and operating styles;
- A system of distinctive, site-managed schools requires a rethinking of accountability;
- The ultimate accountability mechanism for a system of distinctive site-managed schools is parental choice (p. v-vi).

RISK IT!
RESTRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

I suggest to you that the time has come for those of us in education to begin the process of restructuring the organizations we call schools and that we stop being inflexible, begin taking risks and start making changes.

We now are faced with difficult economic times, so this reassessment will not be easy. But, even in these hard times, the public will demand higher expectations of us all - including our students. To accomplish what is expected of us, it will be necessary that we change the way we have done business. The systems that drove us in the past will not serve us in the future.

The path that we have selected in M.S.A.D. #4, to help us reach our goals, is founded in site-based management. We have chosen this governance structure because we believe it has the potential of allowing us a means of educating students with a better understanding of the democratic principles that have driven this country throughout our entire history.

We also believe that in order for this governance experiment to work, it is imperative that there be a marriage between site-based management and consensus decision-making. One, without the other, may well be the death knell for this form of participatory decision-making.

What is proposed in this article is one model that could be used to promote change. We are fully aware that each school district must decide the best way to change, but change we must. If change does not occur, we will jeopardize the future of the students we are charged with educating, as well as the society and country we so cherish.

DEVELOPING SCHOOL REFORM: PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISES

An essential ingredient to school reform is a leader with a vision. This means, not only a leader who can look to the future, but a leader who understands where public education began and use its historical past to inform future decisions and chart a new direction for schooling in their community.

Throughout history, school improvement efforts have targeted the practices, systems and procedures that still characterize today's public education. Schools have struggled with establishing a balance between community influence and participation. Developing "one best system" early in this century reduced the emphasis on local needs and supplanted it with an emphasis on standardization. State mandates and federal initiatives increased and brought turmoil to schools in the 1960s and 1970s as students, teachers and administrators struggled with understanding the interconnection between individual rights and school authority amidst social unrest. As a result, by the 1980s American public schools stood alone with few ties to the community.

In 1983, A Nation at Risk, shook the foundations of American public education and awakened our nation's leaders to a system that was not adequately meeting the educational needs of our youth. This first wave of educational reform spurred numerous reports and spurious reform efforts. Nearly 300 state panels were formed, more than 40 states increased course requirements for graduation, more than 700 state statutes were passed stipulating what should be taught, when and how it should be taught, and who should do the teaching (Sadker & Sadker, 1991, p.513). In effect, reform efforts looked to political solutions to educational problems resulting in more bureaucracy and regulation and less to the purpose of schooling.

A second wave of reform initiatives has seen educators asking for reform. They are advocating a "bottom-up" approach and prefer to focus on schools as the site of reform. Concepts such as "site-based management" and "participatory decision-making" examine ways to reduce bureaucracy and encourage local decision-making. Empowering principals, teachers, students and parents characterize these efforts.

Currently, a third wave of educational reform is emerging, the thrust of which is being driven by a national educational reform agenda. The 1990's brought reports that American students paled in performance compared to their global counterparts. Coupled with a sagging economy and America's need to compete in a globally competitive marketplace, politicians and business leaders again have entered the educational reform arena.

Despite a decade of focus on school reform and calls for the organizational restructuring of schools, they have continued, for the most part, to look as they have always looked. They use the same calendar which was built on the agrarian lifestyle of the 1800s and early 1900s and the major organizational feature is centralized authority built around a bureaucratic structure.

Preparing students for lifelong education should be one of our goals. It should be based on the notion that in this post-industrial society, national prosperity will depend on the effectiveness of its educational processes, particularly schooling (Clabaugh and Rozychi, 1989). Education is becoming increasingly important in our society as future competition in global marketplaces will depend more on the quality of education than on natural resources (Clabaugh and Rozychi, 1989). Educational leaders must recognize that we are no longer preparing students as though their preparation will end upon graduation. K-12 education is fast becoming a concept that will fade away as young people recognize they will need to train and retrain several times throughout their lives to keep pace with a fast-changing world marketplace.

Before developing a plan for change, school leaders must first accept that all of public education must change. The educational styles and practices of the past will not work within today's society.

The responsibilities that have been placed on schools by our society have exceeded our present educational system's ability to successfully respond. Mandates by the federal government, state legislatures and local pressure groups have changed the overall expectation of schools and those charged with overseeing the education of the youth they serve. America's public school students have often become captive audiences of those outside education who want to use schools to promote their own ideas, positions and values.

Today, schools are also faced with meeting the needs of all students, not just the needs of the regular students but all special students everywhere along the spectrum. Twenty-five years ago schools dealt with only a select group of students, yet today we are expected to see to the needs of each student. This change in societies' expectations of education was not met with a change in how schools operated. Most school systems continued to function as they have for the last fifty to one hundred years.

To meet today's needs, educators must begin to work with smaller communities of people as well as larger communities of people. The reshaping of our schools will require that the smaller community of people, those within the educational organization, make every effort to work with the larger community of people, those not directly related to the educational system. Everyone must have the opportunity to participate. Direct input into how schools are to run must be accepted by those responsible for the education of our youth. The practice of isolating "outsiders" from the school system is no longer a style that will be tolerated.

Schools can no longer be run by one person! School leaders must be willing to reexamine existing practices to identify strengths and weaknesses and look for ways to include the school community in decision-making.

Many of the original governance structures that were adopted by schools came from those practiced in private business. The "top down" hierarchal format was the

means. How could those accustomed to a management position understand the complexities of any operation? Certainly no one outside the organization could possibly understand its inner workings. Given that many schools reflected this attitude, one might better understand why students, parents, and those out in the community were intimidated by teachers and principals.

Schools can no longer be run by one person or by a small group of people. Educational organizations must begin to revisit their governance structure. They must begin to look at businesses that have moved from top-down management styles to styles that reflect the democratic principles of participatory decision-making. This change has resulted in improved employee morale, heightened self esteem and increased loyalty.

If schools and school systems could develop these improved attitudes, certainly the children being served would be much better off. High morale and increased enthusiasm would be passed on and most likely the learning environment enhanced. This is reason enough for the school community to reexamine its practices, its willingness to involve others and possibly change its governance structure.

Decision-making is practiced by giving staff the opportunity to make decisions about programming, assessment of students, student discipline and activity policies, as well as hiring of personnel and the development and management of their budgets.

We must learn to "think outside the box", and be willing to take "measured risks".

One of the major problems associated with educational organizations has been a general unwillingness to change. Risk taking has been avoided. Board members, administrators, teachers, and students have all lacked the courage to take the necessary risks that proceed change.

In order for changes to occur, it is necessary that we all be willing to look at things differently. The Board of Directors and the administrators must encourage "*thinking outside the box*" by all who are part of the educational organization. Individuals must not be trapped in the box. There must be a willingness by all to bring in new ideas and to encourage independent thinking. Only when we are willing to view ideas from a different perspective will progress be made and change occur.

Administrators should take the advice of Joel Barker (1992), when he points out that as a manager you need to learn two very important skills - "*how to listen outside the boundaries and how to reinforce your people for taking risk. By doing these things, you establish an atmosphere conducive to exploration that will always pay off in the end*" (p.61).

It is important that we remind ourselves that change should not be made for changes sake, but the continuous exploration of new ideas must be encouraged. Risk taking should be rewarded, not punished. Any punishment associated with risk taking will crush innovation and creativity.

Even though school personnel may find themselves under pressure to stay the course, they must create an environment that allows and promotes risk taking by teachers, parents, and staff. One's willingness to risk must be the model that employees see for instigating change. However, from time to time, it may be a rough trip and one should expect some ups and downs.

Given that many educational organizations of today are held hostage by the practices of the past, then it must follow that the individuals in those schools may also be bound by the same shackles. Therefore, every effort must be made to create a positive attitude toward *thinking outside the box* and creative *risk taking.*

One of the ways this can be encouraged is to explain to all staff members that one vision is "*to think outside the box*". There should be an expectation in the school system that everyone who works in the district looks for ways to improve the organization. Taking *risks* should be rewarded and encouraged.

To successfully implement any reform, a school district must have the commitment from community members, businesses, parents, staff, administrators and school board members to improve schooling in their community.

Commitment to any reform effort is the key to its success. The commitment that we refer to here is more a universal realization of the need to achieve a goal. When change becomes the goal, it is imperative that all parties involved have the opportunity to participate in the formulation. In a school system that is trying to restructure, it is necessary that community members, business leaders, parents, staff, administrators and school board members all be given the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns.

Once a school system has established a relationship with the community it serves, then and only then, will the schools be allowed and encouraged to pursue change. A change that is reflective of what the community will accept and what the school system deems most advantageous to the students it serves. This *mutually achieved understanding and trust* can do nothing but result in a better education for all the students being served, from the five year old to the one hundred and five year old. (EN#1)

Finally, you must be willing to live with confusion.

Moving from top-down management practices to site-based management and shared decision-making is disorienting and confusing. Throughout the maturing process, mistakes will be made by all those involved. Tripping over ones own feet will not be unusual. As a result of all this confusion, everyone will learn to communicate with each other and hopefully become what Roland Barth calls a "*community of learners*" (p.9). This effort in change will test the most dedicated and the most supportive. But, by staying the course, those involved, and those being served, will be the recipients of the rewards of the effort put forth.

One way to help alleviate some of the confusion and frustration is to have staff members involved in retreats and in workshops that cause them to look at themselves and those around them. This process will create challenging interactions which may lead to better understanding of all those involved. But, this will only occur after some turbulence and readjustments. To truly grow into shared decision making, you must find your way up a rocky and creviced slope. Courage, stamina, and determination is a prerequisite to getting to where you are going.

THE MODEL

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

Site-based management, or school-based management as it is frequently called, became a strategy for school improvement in the 1980's and has continued on into the decade of 1990's. It is predicated on the assumption that increasing decision-making at the building level will enable the school to better serve it's students. This participatory management style recognizes the professional expertise of teachers and the crucial role of the principal in espousing organizational values. Adopting site-based management basically involves asking yourself these questions (Strauber, Stanley and Wagenknecht, 1990): What organizational structures will provide for the broadest participation by staff members? What procedures will ensure responsiveness, fairness and efficiency? How is the role of the principal affected?

In addition to re-defining organizational structures, you will need to re-define roles and relationships within schools. Who will make decisions and how will they get made? Four strategic questions are posed by Conley and Bacharach (1990):

- In which decisions will professional teachers become involved?
- Who will make what decisions in school-site management?
- What are the basic tasks of administrators and teachers in the context of decentralized decision-making?
- What is the role of teacher unions in school-site management?

These questions are critical to determining the arrangements of responsibilities of the school community. What role will the students, teachers, principals, parents, superintendents, school board members, and public have in making decisions?

One way of determining decisions would be to define the roles of each player through a decision-making matrix. Conley and Bacharach (1990) propose that decisions can be broken into three parts: operational classroom decisions (e.g. how to teach, what to teach), strategic school decisions (e.g. curriculum, budget, and personnel), and strategic/operational interface (e.g. assignment of students, assignment of teachers, discipline policy, promotion of policy). School personnel could use this matrix to determine how much influence a group should have in each type of decision. It is within these areas that principals, teachers, and administrators must negotiate, make decisions and reach an agreement. Roles and responsibilities need to be carefully examined in making these determinations to avoid future conflicts that may arise from ambiguity over who is responsible for what. That is not to say that conflict won't arise. Conflict among groups can be managed and result in a positive force that will stimulate creative solutions (Meadows, 1990).

Role Definition

The roles and responsibilities of each group must be defined according to role and function within the organization. Consider these definitions:

1. Board of Directors: The boards role in the organization is to *set the direction* of the educational community. This direction can be defined by setting policy, articulating the vision(s) and hiring the Superintendent.

2. Administration: The administrators role in the organization is to expand on the directions established by the Board of Directors. The Superintendent should help clarify the direction of the board, elaborate on the district's vision, and help instill the passion! The working *goals and objectives* will be developed by the building administrators, along with the teachers and staff.

3. Teachers: The teachers role is to *establish strategies* for meeting instructional goals and objectives. Strategizing of educational pedology will be determined by the professional staff.

4. Outside Influences (Parents/Agencies): Even though parents are not formally members of the organization, it is important to include them whenever possible, or whenever they express an interest in being involved. Their value in helping to resolve issues is of considerable help since they are in a unique position to view the organization externally.

Community agencies also are necessary and vital to school operations. Often they provide valuable information, volunteer assistance and support for a variety of projects.

5. Unions: It is important that the issue of dealing with unions be clarified. For site-based management and consensus decisions to work well, it follows that reform will be initiated at individual schools. The source book, *America 2000 an Education Strategy,* (1991) states that "real school improvement happens school by school" (p.23). Thus, a system-wide teachers union would be out of place making professional decisions for its members. Professional teachers would be involved in decisions at their site and each site might differ as to the role teachers play based on the decisions they make. Therefore, administrators must separate their attitudes toward teachers as professionals and teachers as union members. How one views the union and the role it plays is one thing, how one looks at the professionals they employ is another. This distinction between the union and the individual teacher must be made.

Enhancements

Employees are the most important factor in establishing a participatory management system. Each employee who acts in the best interest of the organization enhances the value and productivity of that organization. Given the role employees play and the importance they have, I suggest that one consider the following:

Continuity of Employees

Individuals must understand the goals and objectives of the organization and want to stay because they believe in them. The school system must *retain talented and committed employees*. Procedures must be developed that allow employees to be both productive in their positions and supportive of the organizational mission. There must be *continuity and consistency* among employees.

Incentive

In business, employees are often monetarily rewarded for jobs well done. Bonuses, trips, and other *incentives* are frequently used. Public educators are not accustomed to these practices. Many districts even fail to support educators by allowing them to participate in or attend conferences for professional enrichment.

All employees, whether in business or educational organizations, need to feel good about themselves and their jobs. Public educators need to work closely with Board of Directors to establish incentives for employees, and to encourage employees to reach their highest potential. We must reward outstanding employees!

Employee Satisfaction

Keeping individuals satisfied will reduce turnover and provide stability to the organization. Employees may be more willing to stay if we allow them the opportunity to participate, contribute, grow, and feel good about themselves and the organization.

Application

Once you have decided you want to implement site-based management as a strategy of school improvement, gaining support from the school community is essential. The superintendent and board of directors must fully support site-based management and participate fully in all aspects of its implementations. The superintendent must be vested in the notion of empowering administrators, teachers and students.

Promoting and encouraging site-based management can be a difficult step for administrators. One must possess good self-esteem, have confidence in those around them, and believe others are capable of making decisions and meeting responsibilities. Taking "oneself" out of power can be traumatic. Administrative egos must be left at the door.

Administrators must be willing to share in all areas of decision-making when implementing this approach, especially in such sensitive decision-making areas as budget, personnel, and programming. Adopting participatory budgetary techniques, sharing decisions about the employment of personnel, and widespread involvement in program development are site-based management practices that will start your district thinking about a shift in management practices.

Start with the budget. If you want to gain immediate support for participatory management, unwrap the budget. Include your administrators and teachers in the budget process from beginning to end. Require principals and supervisors to include their employees in budget construction. You must start a conversation between those who need the resource and those who control the resources.

Budgets can be created at the building level and electronically transferred to the superintendent's office, where all site budgets would be consolidated. The central office would then review budget expenditures in relationship to revenues. If discrepancies occur, budgets would be returned to the sites for adjustments. Finally, the administrative team would review the budget so that district perspectives are not lost.

When the budget process is complete, those school members who have prepared the budget for their building would be responsible for presenting the budget to the Board of Directors. Further modifications may be made, but the important point here is that those people involved in the budget process are in a position to work directly with the Board of Directors to support their programs and staff.

Once the budget has been approved, those responsible for the budget at each site must have daily access to budgetary information. Access to the summary lines and the details of each account must be available and up-to-date. This can be accommodated by networking all computers with the central accounting system. That way each principal, school nurse, transportation director, maintenance supervisor, food service supervisor, coordinator of library/media services, adult education director and special services director have daily access to the budget. To make this work effectively, the central office must pay vendors weekly, or a minimum of twice a month. In a school system formatted in this manner, the paper chase associated with budget management is minimized.

The single most important aspect of this form of budget construction and management is the clarification of accountability. <u>Everyone</u> must understand who is responsible and accountable for each part of the budget.

Developing new employment techniques. With site-based management, employing personnel becomes a key issue. Staff must be involved in employment decisions. If the new employee is going to be supported by those already employed, the chances of acceptance are greater if those already employed are involved in the selection. Employees affected by the hiring of new personnel should be involved in reviewing applications, interviewing, and post-interview discussions. Teachers and administrators who have ownership in newly hired personnel are more likely to take the mentorship of these individuals more seriously. This type of employment practice is more likely to be successful if those involved feel that their input is instrumental in the final decision. This process also makes all those involved in the hiring more responsible for the new employee.

Sharing program development. When present programs are reviewed or new programs suggested, input should be obtained from many and varied sources. This developmental process should include professional staff, administrators, parents, community representatives and outside agencies, as appropriate. Even though this process may take more time, the eventual success of the program may lie in its broad based support. Thorough investigation of the program needs are enhanced by granting those most closely involved the opportunity to evaluate the present programs as well as propose and implement new ideas. (EN#2)

Facilitating open communication. Understanding how teachers, principals and administrators view one another is a critical step in opening channels of communication. Administrators need to recognize they are managing **professionals** and that their input is essential to the successful operation of the organization. Professionals need information. They also need the autonomy to make decisions based on the information they have.

An electronic communications system (see Appendix A) can be put in place throughout the district to assist with exchanging information among personnel. Each supervisor and principal in the district, serving on an administrative team and responsible for a budget, can be linked electronically to the main server in the central office to access the budget and information relevant to their operations. All units should also be connected to a system-wide electronic mail system. This mail system can be used to update all appropriate parties for the purpose of exchanging information. Students and teachers should also be connected to networks that facilitate instruction and provide teachers with appropriate student information. (EN#3)

All media centers in a school district should also be networked both internally and externally so that all students and professional personnel can access stored information. (EN#4)

Paper communication is fast becoming a thing of the past. Computer networks are eliminating our dependencies on telephones and all students are learning the concepts associated with worldwide communications.

Research shows that extensive networking within an organization tends to flatten out traditionally hierarchical structures of organization (Sherblom, 1988).

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Delegating authority to the site, the main focus of site-based management, does not insure that the school community will become fully engaged in the process. To engage the school community fully, the authority delegated to the school site must be distributed among school community members -- administrators, teachers, parents, and community members (Mutcher and Duttweiler, 1990).

Consensus decision-making (often referred to as shared decision-making or participatory decision-making) is a collaborative approach in which "superordinate" and "subordinates" work together as equals to "share and analyze problems together, generate and evaluate alternatives, and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on decisions. Joint decision-making occurs as influence over the final choice is shared equally, with no distinction between superordinate and subordinates" (Wood, 1984, p. 61). With consensus, majority does not rule. Rather, consensus decision-making is a technique for arriving at decisions where all parties involved agree to the solution of an opportunity. Consensus building makes it possible for all involved to win, not compromise, but actually win. The essence of this approach to decision-making is not that people accept other ideas or alternatives, but that through the sharing of additional information, the solution becomes an alternative that everyone has ownership in.

Wood (1984) described the positive influence that shared decision-making has on participants and the organization:

- High quality of decisions
- Improved employee satisfaction or morale
- Commitment
- Productivity
- A reduction in resistance to change
- A reduction in absenteeism

For consensus decision-making to thrive, however, a climate which allows for varying opinions and a willingness by all parties to change predisposed positions must be developed -- a climate fostered by site-based management. The AFT Center for Restructuring has noted that "school based management will more likely meet its goals when it is coupled with meaningful shared decision-making" (School-Based Management, 1988, p.5).

Process

Use of Factual Information

The primary objective of consensus building is to arrive at the best decision based on all available *facts*. The completeness of the inquiry is paramount.

Questioning Preconceptions

When we are asked to participate in the solution of a problem, we often are tempted to do something because "that is the way it was done in the past". This attitude often is a hindrance to innovation. We need to consciously resist this tendency and dispose of any and all artificial barriers and *question all preconceptions*.

Time Commitment

Every effort should be made to make the right decision 100 percent of the time (Webber, 1990). The amount of *time* expended to gather and analyze the information required to make the decision should not be a deterrent to implementing the process.

Flexibility

In the process of building consensus, individuals must *be flexible*. One must be willing to recognize what is changing around them and be constantly looking for opportunities that arise. Then, one must be flexible enough to respond. Inflexible acts as an anchor which hold the organization in place while others pass by. Flexibility in any school system often meets with heavy resistant. The people who work in the system, the administrators managing the system, and the board members who establish the direction are often satisfied with the "way things are". Tradition breeds security while change creates anxiety.

Action

Once consensus has been achieved, it is paramount that the decisions agreed to be acted on. There should be no hesitation.

Ingredients

Once you have decided to adopt consensus decision-making in your district, there are certain procedures that will assist in its implementation. To reach consensus, the following axioms must be accepted:

1. **There must be a willingness to express any and all concerns.**

2. There must be a willingness to voice all reservations.

3. There must be a willingness to respect each others point of view.

4. There must be a willingness to take the time necessary to reach consensus.

5. There must be a willingness to change position as data accumulates and information dictates.

6. There must be a willingness to support the decision through shared commitment.

In addition to these underlying axioms, there must exist a climate that encourages bringing ideas and problems forward. Once an idea or problem has been proposed, it should be accompanied by a recommendation which lists the benefits and risks associated with the proposal. Once forwarded, the following steps will ensue. The proposal and recommendations will be brought before the next appropriate consensus building group. This group will consist of any or all parties directly affected by the recommendation. Once consensus is reached at this level, a written action plan will be established and responsibilities assigned. Implementation and evaluation will follow.

These strategies will work only if you have committed yourself to reforming school practices in your district. This takes more than just a management plan, it takes dedication and a desire to achieve change.

SUMMARY

Schools must change to meet the needs of today's society. We are moving out of a style born of "rugged individualism" towards a participatory culture which needs to "maximize the use of technology and information in order to survive as a world-class culture into the 21st century" (Mulchler and Duttweiler, 1990). Developing effective schools to meet this demand is challenging. There has been numerous attempts to reform schooling, with little uniform success.

Marshall (1989) outlines several ways we can take a lesson from industry in restructuring our schools. First, we must accept that our students are going to have to enter the marketplace with high-order thinking skills in order to be competitive. Second, we need to follow industry's lead and make radical reforms to our educational institutions. Several steps must be taken: reduce bureaucracy; move decisions into classrooms and reward those who teach and those who learn; we must be committed to giving **everybody** the best possible education (pp. 9-11).

It is apparent that if we want to adopt a governance style that marries site-based management and consensus decision-making, teachers must develop decision-making skills and be given opportunities to develop leadership skills. We have done far too little to assist teachers in these areas.

We must also work to develop <u>trust</u> among all members of the organization. Boards of Directors must trust superintendents, superintendents trusting building administrators and supervisors, and teachers must trust the school system.

We can do this if we are willing to change our attitudes about education and adopt new strategies. It is my contention that unless we adopt some of the strategies of site-based management and consensus decision-making, we will continue in the downward spiral plaguing many schools in our country. Until we begin modeling our schools after the democratic principals we espouse, our course will be charted in the wrong direction.

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT
Participatory Management

Advantages	Problems
1. Educational needs of students more clearly defined and met.	1. Educating Board of Directors on site-based management.
2. Strategization of educational pedagogy left to teachers.	2. Establishing Board policies that allow for site-based management.
3. Staff needs are better met.	3. Creating a chart of accounts that reflects the organizational structure.
4. Staff morale seems to improve because of individual involvement.	4. Educating and training principals and supervisor in: • Leadership techniques • Decision-making • Budgeting • Recruiting/Hiring practices • Willing acceptance of accountability
5. Pride will increase at each site.	5. Getting staff involved in making decisions and accepting accountability.
6. There will be better understanding of the site budget as well as the district budget.	6. Prioritizing of limited resources.
7. More employees involved in decision making.	7. Getting site employees to work together and appreciate what each one has to offer.
8. More of a willingness by those involved to accept responsibility.	8. Introduction of appropriate technology.
9. Development of better relationships between: •Staff and Administrators •Staff and Board Members •Administrators and Board Members	9. Finding time to meet the many training needs.
10. Administrators and supervisors management skills improved.	10. Convince staff to take time to train.
11. Site goals and district goals more clearly articulated.	11. Getting staff to accept the idea of risk-taking.

The transition to this management style will cause all involved to lose sleep, be occasionally short tempered and have an urge to return to the old way.

But in the end, it will be worth it!

OBSERVATIONS

After four years of developing and refining a site-based management governance style, I offer the following observations:

NEEDS

1. **Board of Directors: Acceptance and Courage**

One of the most fundamental issues that must be resolved is that of getting the Board of Directors to willingly accept the ideas and principal that drive site-based management. This can only be accomplished through the continuous education of board members. Therefore, the Superintendent must spend a considerable amount of time explaining the details of site-based management to individual members at one-on-one sessions. It also means that directors must be involved, not in managing, but in committee work and establishing of goals and visions.

The Directors must then show the necessary courage that is needed in any risk-taking organization. They must have the courage to allow administrators to manage the organization, take risk and promote new ideas, even though as individual board members they are uncomfortable with some of the decisions.

So, if administrators keep Directors informed and follow goals and visions of the Board of Directors, the individual members of the board will tend to be more supportive.

2. **District Policy Development**

If site-based management is to work, it is necessary that the policies that regulate the district be structured in such a way that they allow for the development of a participatory management style. The policies must clearly note that the decision-making powers are to be shared. This can be accomplished by giving the superintendent the authority to designate the decision-makers or by identifying the decision-makers in policy. From past experience I would suggest that to define the decision-makers in policy might create problems in the future. One must keep in mind that any form of participatory decision making style usually requires flexibility. Change occurs continuously.

In many cases the policies of school districts have been written in a style that supports top down management techniques, thus they must be rewritten. To rewrite long established and well entrenched policies will be a test of courage by everyone involved.

3. **Articulation of Vision and Goals**

Each school district has a procedure for establishing its goals and its visions, but in many cases these goals and visions are discarded within weeks of

their formulation. I suggest to you that more attention be paid to how goals and visions are established, especially if they represent what the district truly intends to be guided by. If one goes to a form of participatory management style and follows the premises associated with that management style, then the established goals become the driving force behind the decisions being made.

For goals and visions to have meaning, it is necessary that you involve as many members of the organization as possible. You might also consider including interested parties outside the educational community. For those who become involved there is a sense of ownership of the ideas which means that the goals and visions are more likely to be met with success.

Finally, the goals and visions must be articulated over and over. This is necessary so that everyone in the organization and outside the organization has a clearer picture of what the goals and visions are and what they mean.

4. Restructuring the Chart of Accounts

In many school districts it will be necessary that the accounting system be completely revised. The chart of accounts must reflect the relationship between decision-making and accountability. Each site's financial responsibilities must be clearly identified. If a site is to be truly represented in the budget, then operations associated with that site must be classified and listed under the site. For example, under the site designated as the high school you would need, at a minimum, the following accounts: instructional cost, office of the principal, guidance, library/media services, operation of the plant, co-curricular, athletics, athletic travel, field trips and any other number of items that site is responsible for.

If you intend to make someone responsible and accountable for that site, then that person must know what they are responsible and accountable for. Management of the accounts will play a significant role in that site managers success.

I can not over stress the need to do this step carefully and with a great deal of thought. It is very difficult to go back and make corrections once the accounts have been established and the organization of those accounts put in place.

5. Training and Learning for Everyone

The assumption is often made that everyone involved in the educational community understands all the many and varied aspects of the organization. It continues to worry me as to how tunnel visioned we are. Each segment of the educational community seems to function by itself, with little understanding of what the other segments are doing. Teachers know their role, secretaries know their role, bus drivers know theirs, but in many cases there does not seem to be an understanding and a compassion for others. This leads to many misunderstandings and mistruths.

For site-based management to be enhanced, two basic things must occur. First, each member of the organization must clearly understand their job and the responsibilities associated with that job. Secondly, there must be a better understanding of the jobs others are responsible for. This knowledge of what others are responsible for helps to curb potential misunderstandings.

To accomplish the preceding, it is necessary that everyone be trained. They must be more knowledgeable in their job. They must understand the role of others and they must learn to appreciate the varied personalities of their peers. They must be trained in leadership skills. They must understand the decision-making process and they need to be willing participants of change.

The Board of Directors must recognize these training needs and support them financially. Training must be continuous. Every effort must be made to enhance the knowledge and understanding of each employee. It may seem overwhelming at times, but it must be done.

6. Technology

It appears, at this point in time, that for site-based management to have a real opportunity to succeed, it is necessary that the organization have the technology to facilitate the communication links that are necessary when people depend on one another in the decision making process. Available information and the timely accessing of that information, makes the difference.

The basic technology that a system should have would include an administrative network that encompasses the offices of the Superintendent, principals and supervisors. The network should include the district's software for accounting and communications.

Accounting access should be controlled through the use of password security but the communications system should be available to everyone. As the use of computers and networks become common place among your employees, the quality of there usage will be enhanced.

Technology has allowed participatory management styles to be more viable than ever before. The issue of communications in site-based management can not be minimized - it is critical.

7. Trust

The one issue that must be present if site-based management is to work is a basic trusting relationship between everyone in the organization. Because employees are so dependent on one another, each member of the organization must believe that every other member is doing his/her best. Trust must be shown by board members, administrators, teachers and support staff. Even at difficult moments, we must believe in others and trust them to make the right decisions.

Trouble Spots

1. "No Way" Employees

There will always be some employees in the organization that are unable to adjust to the changes. They may not be able to accept the responsibilities associated with the accountability. They may be to insecure or they may feel that an organization should be managed in another way. Whatever the reasons are for their inability to adjust, for site-based management to work, they must be willing to change, take risk, accept responsibility and be trusting of others.

If they are unable to adjust then the very forces that brought participatory management to the organization are the forces that may make them uncomfortable enough to leave. Once the critical mass is reached and the train starts down the track, the momentum will carry most employees.

2. Unwilling Administrator or Supervisor

A supervisor or administrator who is opposed to this form of governance is a great danger to the organization. Usually they are people who have not had to accept the consequences of their actions. If a decision they made was unpopular, they blamed it on someone else - *the devil made me do it.* It could be they are not secure enough in their own person to be accountable for their decisions. Or, it might be that they have never been trained in decision-making and leadership skills. If it is training they lack, then you may be able to get them trained so that they will be successful. But, for those individuals who lack the courage, resist change, fear risk taking, shutter at being held accountable or avoid responsibility then they need to find employment elsewhere. You must have strong administrators and supervisors, people who believe in themselves and want to make a difference.

3. Time

The amount of time and energy individuals must spend to make site-based management work is extensive. There are more meetings, more gatherings of factual data, more time spent making decisions, more time spent listening, and more time preparing. There is never enough time. Efforts have to be made to free up extra time for people. How to do this continues to be a problem we have not been able to solve.

ENDNOTES

(MSAD #4 ACTIVITIES)

1. **TRANSITION TASK FORCE**

In M.S.A.D. #4, a Transition Task Force was formed to create a forum for participatory decision-making. This Task Force met on regular occasions for over a year. Representatives of this group also held some eighteen public hearings - two public hearings in each of the district's six towns, plus six general hearings. All of this was done prior to the Task Force reporting to the Board of Directors. The "*Bible*", as it is often referred to, set the direction for the district as well as establishing a format upon which to build present and future goals. Once the information in this document was married to the philosophy of the district, which was established earlier from public input, a clear vision emerged that was founded in community support.

2. **PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

At PCHS, there is a Steering Committee of teachers and staff set up to oversee new educational ideas and developments. They make decisions as to the best techniques to deliver educational services and the best programs to enhance student knowledge. At the middle school, teachers are now involved in determining the best methods to use in the education of fifth and sixth grade students. Decisions on methods and programs will be developed by the team. At one elementary school, they have chosen to develop a teacher/parent council to oversee the education of the students in that school. They are also developing the techniques associated with site-based management. Another elementary school is piloting a new scheduling program to accommodate the professional talent at that school. Developing new programming ideas is encouraged and rewarding, especially by those responsible for the strategizing of educational techniques.

3. **CHAPTER I NETWORK (K-4)**

The eight Chapter I sites (high school, middle school, and six elementary schools) in the district are linked through a network (Appendix B), as are the elementary classrooms (K-4). Students in one town can communicate with students by way of the computer mail system or bulletin board system. Kindergarten, as well as fourth graders use the system regularly, sometimes to leave mail, other times to do projects together. This electronic media allows teachers, administrators and students to communicate. Shortly, each elementary school will be linked with the district's external networks for the exchange of educational ideas and information sharing. An internal network has been established at the high school (see Appendix C) that will allow every professional personnel the opportunity to access several internal data banks, plus external network systems, including communications with the central office.

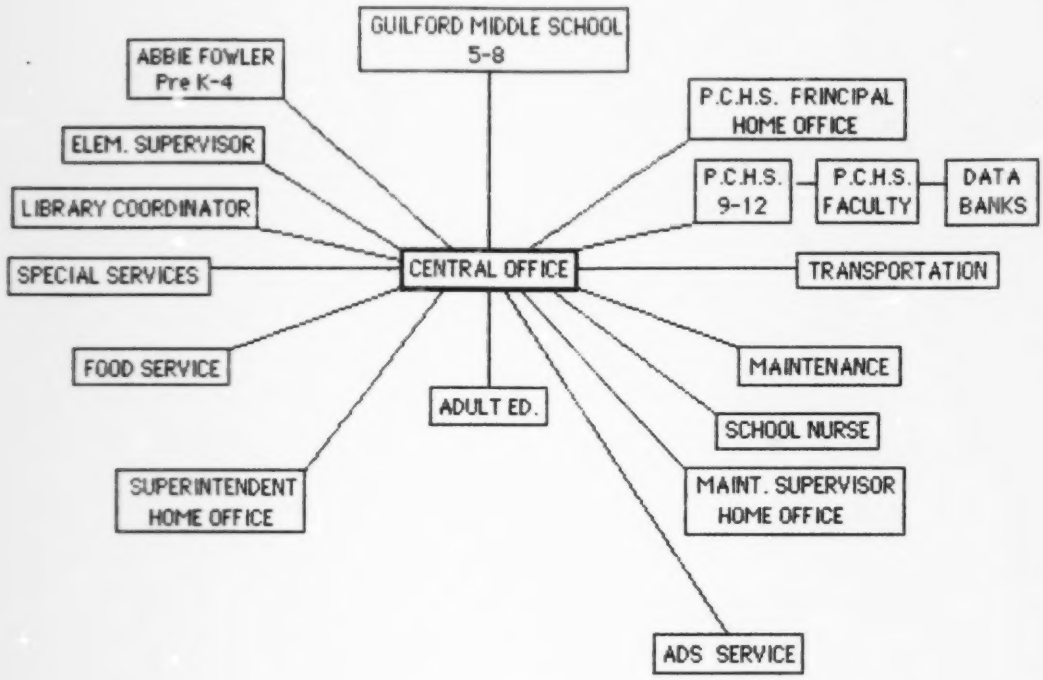
4. LIBRARY MEDIA NETWORKS

In addition to the previously described networked systems, we are also developing a library/media networking system designed to facilitate the use of our libraries internal data base, as well as access external data bases. All of these internal and external network systems will be available to students, teachers, and community learners (Appendix D). At the present, the high school classrooms are networked to the library and the final hardware/software connections are being made to link all the district libraries (K-12).

S.A.D. #4

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

CENTRAL OFFICE

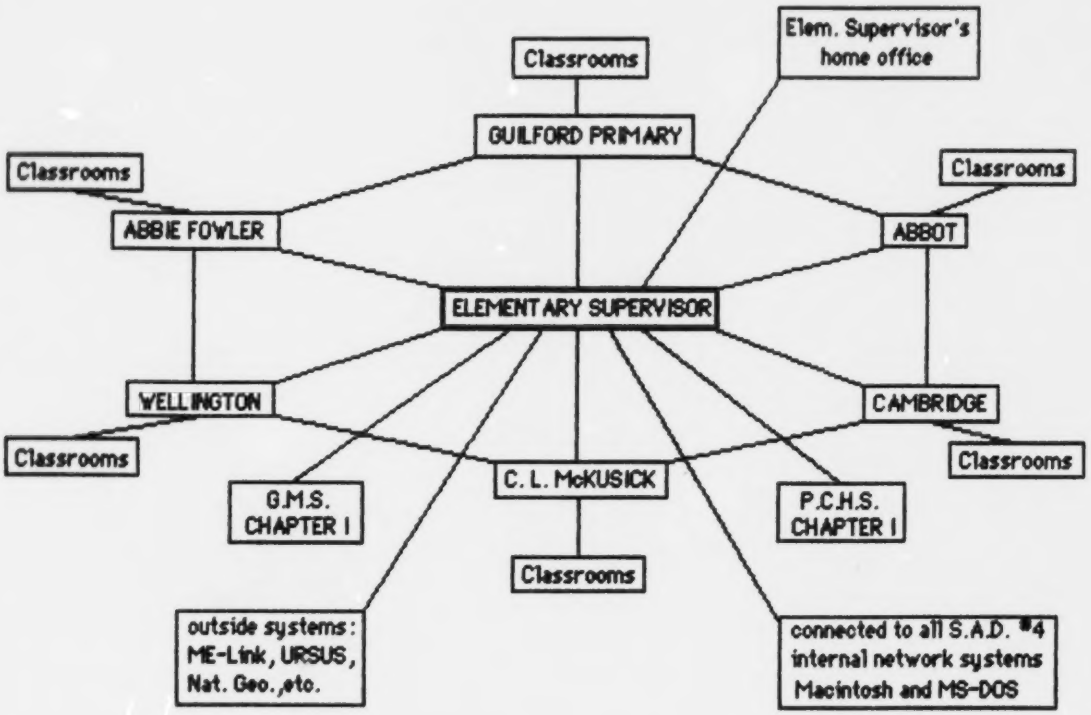


This Communications System Serves The Needs Associated With:

1. **Budget Construction**
2. **Day to Day Management of Budget**
3. **Internal Mail System**
4. **District-wide Inventory**
5. **Monthly District Calendar**
6. **District Staff Communication Committee Bulletin Board**

APPENDIX B

S.A.D. #4
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
ELEMENTARY (K-4)



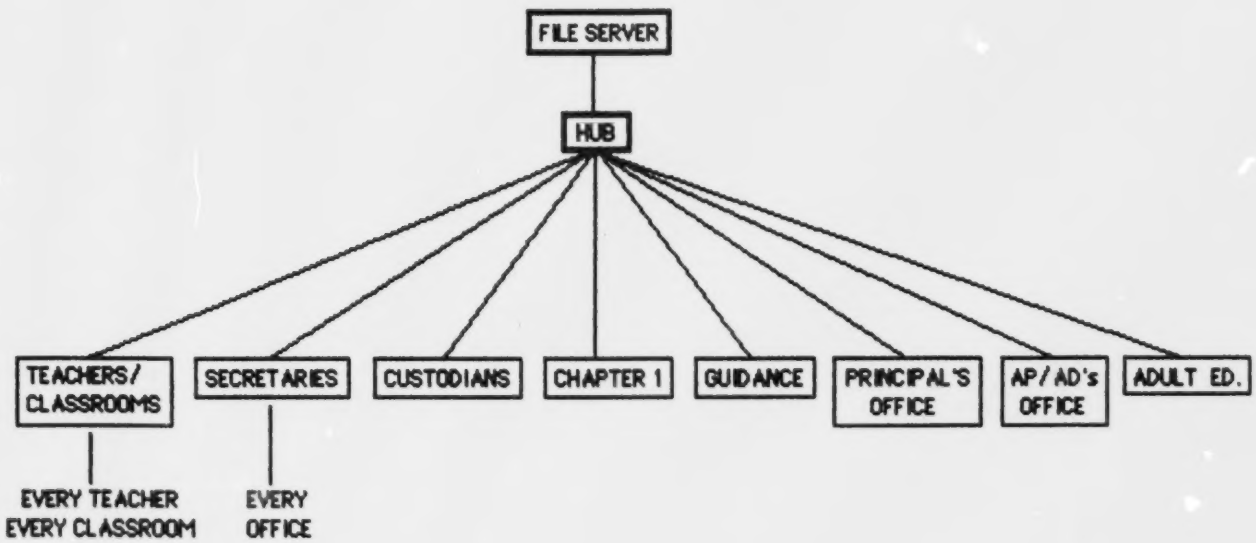
- All school sites are connected to every other school site in addition to the Elementary Supervisor
- All sites have external connections to other Macintosh systems
- All Chapter I rooms are connected at all levels (K-12)
- All computers have access to outside systems such as ME-Link, URSUS, Nat. Geo. etc.

FUNCTIONS

- chat mode
- electronic mail/bulletin board
- file transfer
- classroom projects (between schools)

APPENDIX C

S.A.D. #4
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
PISCATAQUIS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL



NETWORK INCLUDES:

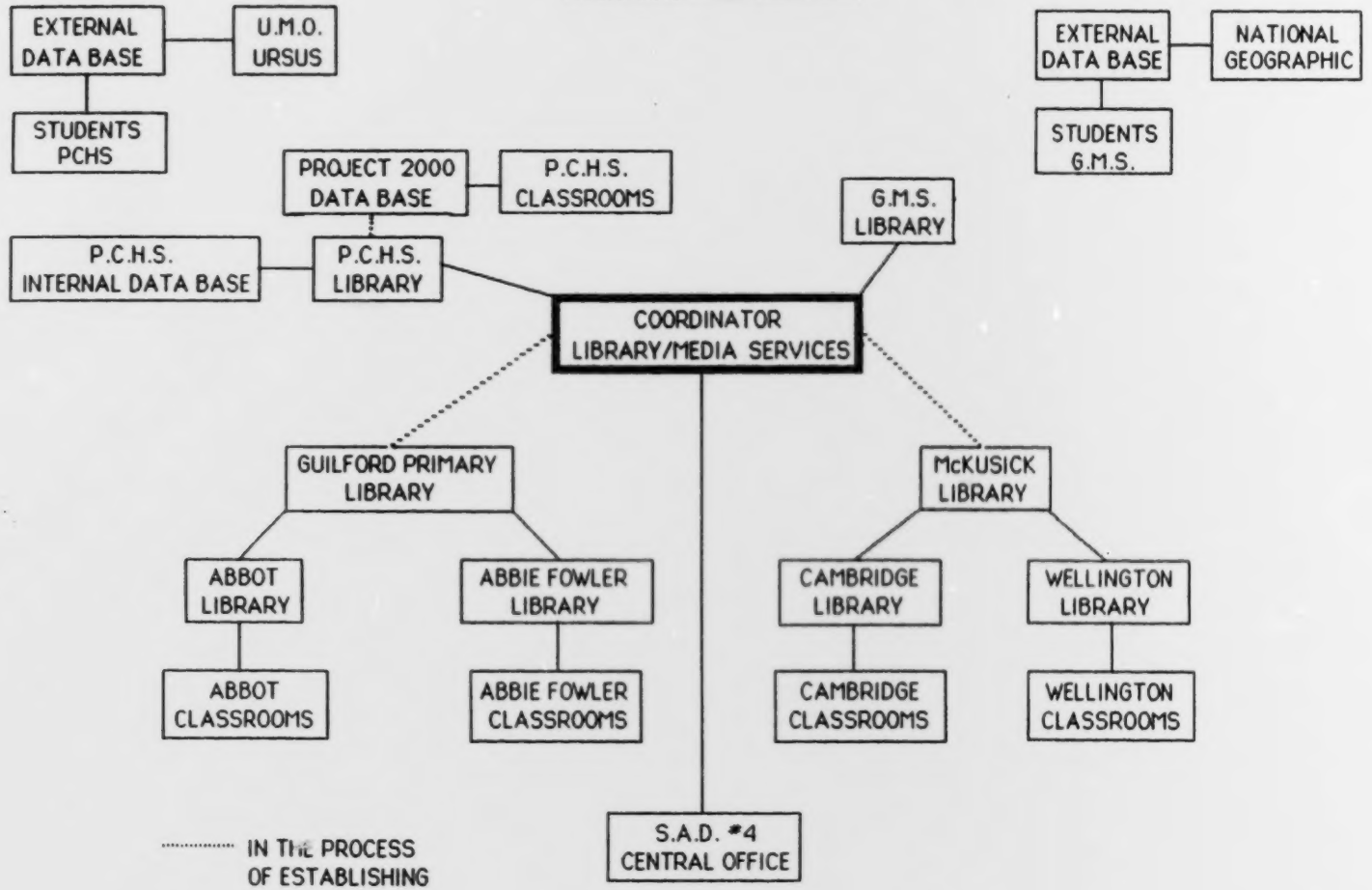
1. CC Mail - 42 users
2. AES - 50 users
   (scheduling, attendance, and grade reporting)

INDIVIDUAL PC'S (40 MB HARD DISK DRIVE)

1. Microsoft Windows
2. Microsoft Works
3. Microsoft Publisher
4. EXCEL
5. Teacher Grade Book
6. Desktop (Plan Book)

APPENDIX D

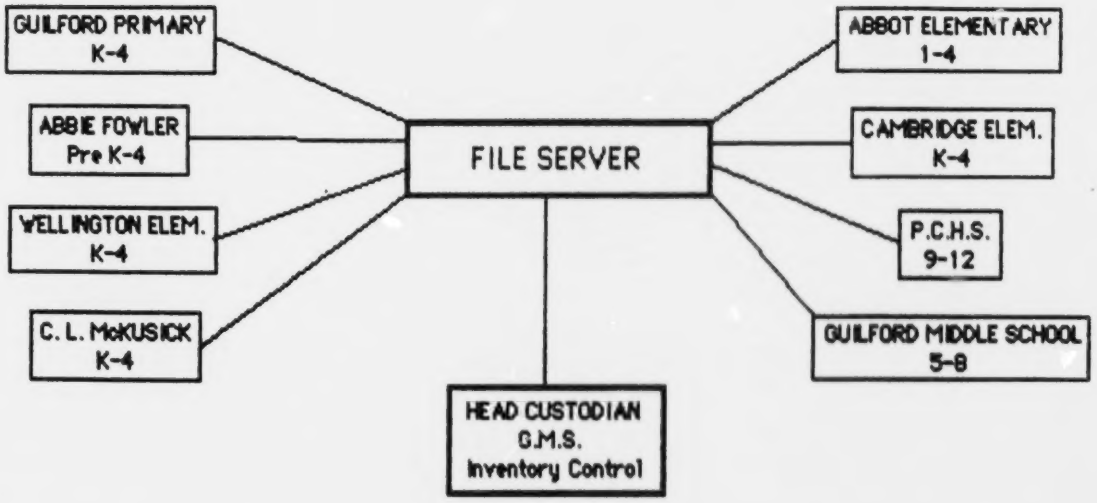
S.A.D. #4
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
LIBRARY NETWORK



APPENDIX E

S.A.D. #4
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
CUSTODIANS

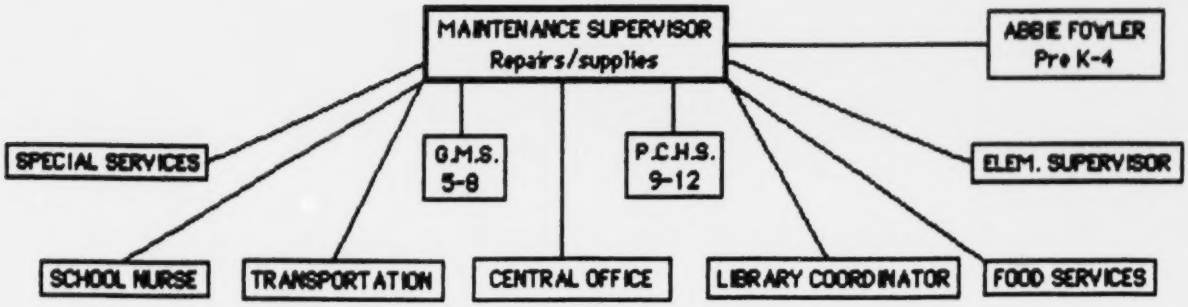
(Macintosh System)



MACINTOSH SYSTEM

1. All schools are connected
2. Supply requisitions can/do travel electronically
3. Head custodian at G.M.S. distributes supplies (inventory control)

(MS DOS System)



MS DOS SYSTEM

1. All sites are connected except for five (5) elementary schools (process to connect in progress)
2. All repair orders use this system in addition to supply requests from those not on the Macintosh system

APPENDIX F

S.A.D. #4

DECISION MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- District Policy: Establishes
- District Vision(s): Establishes
- District Budget: Establishes
- Professional Personnel: Employs
- Superintendent: Employs

SUPERINTENDENT

- District Policy: Interprets
- District Vision(s): Directs
- District Budget: Oversees
- Personnel: Nominates/Hires
- District Resources: Facilitator

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

- District Policy: Recommends
- District Vision(s): Recommends
- District Budget: Recommends
- District Procedures: Determine

BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS OR SITE SUPERVISORS

- District Policy: Participates in Formulation
- District Vision(s): Participates in Formulation
- District Budget: Participates in Formulation
- Personnel: Recommends
- Site Vision(s): Formulates
- Site Goals and Objectives: Formulates
- Programs: Formulates
- Site Budget: Manages/Formulates

TEACHERS AND STAFF

- District Policy: Participates in Formulation
- District Vision(s): Participates in Formulation
- District Budget: Participates in Formulation
- Site Vision(s): Formulates
- Site Goals and Objectives: Formulates
- Programs: Formulates
- Site Budget: Participates in Formulation
- Instructional Strategies: Establishes

APPENDIX G

S.A.D. #4
TIME LINE
FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

1986 - 1988 **1.** **District in some turmoil.**

- **a. Board involved in micro-managing.**
- **b. Conflict between board members.**
- **c. Superintendent and Board in conflict.**
- **d. Community support limited.**

1987 - 1988 **2.** **Some board members begin to discuss need to review district policies.**

Summer 1988 **3.** **Hiring of new Superintendent.**

4. **Screening Committee made up of cross section of staff and board members.**

- **b. Screening Committee looking for new management style.**
- **c. Board did final interviews and selected a Superintendent with site-based management views.**

1988 - 1989 **4.** **Establishment of a complete new chart of accounts for bookkeeping purpose (50 pages plus separate companies).**

- **a. Each site is identified.**
- **b. Cost relating to each site clarified.**
- **c. Principal or supervisor in charge of site identified.**
- **d. More detailed accounting practices established.**
- **e. Clearer explanation of district cost to public.**

1988 - 1989 **5.** **Establishment of good working relationship with media.**

- **a. Send copies of all material sent to board members to media.**
- **b. Include media in discussions.**
- **c. Be available to media.**

1988 - 1989	6.	Procedure for establishing district goals instituted.
		a. Establishment of goals at all levels.
		b. Summation of goals to determine direction.
1989	7.	Task Force established and its report presented to Board (Dec. 1989).
		a. Task Force goal was to establish direction for district over next five years.
		b. Membership included board members, teachers, support staff and community members.
		c. Public Hearings were held in each town.
		d. A total of 18 Public Hearings were held and community input taken.
		e. "Task Force" report presented to Board of Directors.
		d. Board approves "Task Force" report as next five year goals.
1989 - 1990	8.	Complete revision of district policy manual.
		a. Policy Committee created by Board of Directors
		b. Committee membership included board members, teachers and staff as well as input from anyone who was affected by a policy.
		c. Public input encouraged.
		d. Policies allowed for site-based management style.
1989	9.	Policy committee established as standing committee.
1990 - 1991	10.	Administrative policies included in district policy manual for purposes of explaining and interpreting district policy.
1988 - 1992	11.	Supervisors of sites educated in procedures associated with site-based management.
		a. Relationship between having decision-making power and being accountable.
		b. Knowledge of total cost of operating a site.
		c. Budget and budget procedures (i.e., P.O.'s).
		d. Need for team building and sharing of power.

e. Understanding and handling of personnel.

1988 - 1992 12. Board of Directors educated in site-based management.

a. Role of Board to establish policy, direction, and budget.

b. Allowing administrators to manage district.

c. Understand who is responsible and accountable at each site.

d. Being understanding about risk-taking.

1989 - 1992 13. Measured risk-taking becomes a way of life - change encouraged.

1988 - 1992 14. Involvement of technology associated with site-based management.

a. Central office completely computerized.

b. Established internal computer network in office with password security.

c. Establishing external computer network connected to the supervisor of each site (i.e., transportation/maintenance/food services/nurse/library co-ordinator and each principal) with built in security.

d. All supervisors to access their accounts 24 hours a day 7 days a week (for purposes of accountability).

e. Installed a computer mail system and bulletin board system into the computer network.

f. Information of all type passes through the computer network mail system.

g. Several Administrators have computers at home connected to their office and system wide networks.

1991 - 1992 15. Expansion of technology relating to operations.

a. Elementary schools establish network between schools (six) with own mail system and bulletin boards.

b. Each elementary school begins to establish internal networks.

c. High school established internal network (each staff member has own work station).

d. High school establishes its own internal computer mail system and bulletin board system.

S. A. D. # 4
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS
"NEXT STEPS"

1. **Provide a telephone for every teacher's classroom so they are better able to keep in touch with parents (use voice mail or answering machines).**

2. **Make the central office electronic mail systems accessible to <u>all</u> employees in the district.**

3. **Have a central office inventory system that:**

    a. **Includes inventories from all sites;**
    b. **Is accessible to all sites by means of a central data base;**
    c. **Automatically post account 730 purchase orders to inventories.**

4. **Establish a district-wide weekly electronic newsletter accessible to all district personnel through electronic mail.**

5. **Establish an electronic plan book data base for all teachers; which will allow the following:**

    a. **Teachers would be aware of each others lesson plans which should improve co-ordination of student learning;**
    b. **Establishment of a homework data base accessible to students (24 hr/day - 7 days/week);**
    c. **Have modem attached to homework data base for student access from home or when traveling.**

6. **Provide "notebook" computers for students.**

    a. **Access to updated electronic textbooks.**
    b. **Access data when on field trips.**
    c. **Electronic recording of projects in school, at home or in small groups.**
    d. **Help students educate their parents in technology.**
    e. **Homework submitting on disk.**
    f. **Plus many other opportunities.**

7. **Libraries completely connected.**

    a. **Every library in the district connected to every other library and accessible to students and staff.**
    b. **External connections to the University and other major national and international data bases.**

8. **International communications.**

    a. **Establish world wide computer links at all grade levels.**
    b. **Establish world wide computer links for teachers.**

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WHO SHALL "BELL THE CAT"

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